



The
Buddhist
Temple
of
Chicago

January
2025

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Every Moment is a New Year
Rev. Frederick Brenion

Growing up, New Year's Day always seemed different from other holidays. It wasn't a religious day like Christmas. It wasn't a national day like the Fourth of July or Thanksgiving. It was just itself. It's sort of like our own birthdays, only New Year's Day is a birthday party for the world.

I'm told that in Japan individual birthdays weren't celebrated until about 1950. Everyone celebrated their birthday on New Year's Day and everyone got a year older on that day. This is probably why New Year's Day is the most popular holiday in Japan. New Year's Day in Japan is like everyone having a birthday party together. It gives a message that while each of us is special, and we are, we are also all in it together. There is much good Buddhism in that.

There is something about New Year's Day that makes us want to celebrate, plan, and hope. It's a new start, a do-over. I know that I need a new start. And I hope a start that leads to real Awakening.

On New Year's Day, many people wake up with hangovers. Others are watching parades or planning for the big game of the day. Some go to temple to hear the Dharma. Each of us is making the start we need. We could go hear the Dharma. We could all be sleeping in right now. I need to hear the Dharma. I need to get my perspective straight. I am about to step out into the year and I don't want to fall flat on my face when I do so. On New Year's Day, there is the custom of making resolutions; what we want to accomplish. We do this every year. I can't speak for others, but I seldom keep any of my resolutions. I have good intentions, but I fall flat on my face once more. I usually give up, start again next year, and the next, never getting anything done.

The meaning of Jodo Shinshu is the meaning of New Year's Day. Some of my friends describe themselves as being Christmas and Easter Christians. They identify with a certain holiday as being central to their self-meaning. I think then that I am a New Year's Day Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. I make resolutions and fail to follow them. I am at heart a self-power person. That is why I always fall on my face. I need to grasp this. In our central story a great Bodhisattva, Dharmakara, sees clearly for the first time in encountering the Dharma. Then makes the deepest resolution possible. Dharmakara knows that everything is at stake and completely commits. Unlike me, Dharmakara gets the job done in a resolution made for everyone's benefit, the Primal Vow, welcoming all as we are. This is our new start. It is for all in all moments.

I have learned that my resolutions are never deep enough. I wonder if I could ever make the resolution needed? What I come to know now is that it has already been made and kept for me. I need only to rely on that and that alone. That is the meaning of Nenbutsu. I rely on Infinite Compassion and Wisdom alone. This is Namu Amida Butsu.

Now I can smile this New Year's Day because whether I succeed or not, the Dharma, imaged as Amida Buddha, has already succeeded for me. I am accepted as I am, right now, every now. Each now is always a new now, no matter what, because of this. Each now is always a New Year's Now, even if it is at the last day of the year, or when it comes at the last moment of life. Every end is a beginning. This is the happiness of Happy New Year.

Let's grow this year in this spirit as a temple community, spreading the Dharma as everyone's New Year. Make this New Year yours by making the Nenbutsu yours. Happy New Year everyone!

Look Back, Look Ahead
Bill Bohlman, Temple President

As we greet the New Year, we look back on 2024. At last we seem to have recovered from the disruption of Covid. Attendance at Sunday service has improved and we were able to hold all our events.

Natsu Matsuri proved to be a success as both a fundraiser and a time to share with the sangha. Obon Odori drew an enthusiastic crowd. The year was brought to a close with mochitsuki. However, as we begin 2025 we are faced with many challenges.

The main concern is our declining paid membership. Although we have new members, the overall membership number has declined. The question facing us is how can we turn this around? What is it that the members want from the temple? Although we do not currently have a resident minister, Rev. Fred Brenion provides guidance and leads the Sunday service. Arrangements are in place for memorial services when requested.

On the last Sunday of January, we will hold our annual general membership meeting. Election of officers will take place at this time. The current officers are all willing to stand for their current position, but new faces are desired. We need the next generation of leaders to step forward. The future of the temple depends on an ever evolving group of leaders; in both the administrative and cultural aspects of the temple.

Even with these issues, the temple remains a vibrant home of the Dharma. For over eighty years, the teachings have found a home here. With a dedicated and involved sangha, we will thrive for years to come. On behalf of the board of directors, we wish you a happy and healthy New Year. Namu Amida Butsu.

Deepest Sympathy

To the family and friends of

SHIZUKO HONDA – December 8, 2024



Scheduled Activities – subject to change

Weekly services – Sundays 11 am - in-person, Facebook Live

Qigong (Chinese exercise) – Saturdays 10 am

Sunday Meditation – 9:00 am

Thursday Meditation – 7:15 pm

Asoka Society (social gathering) – On break until March

The above activities are open to the public and free (donations appreciated).

If you are interested in the two activities below, please leave your contact information and the group will set up an appointment for you to visit them.

Iaido (martial art) – Mondays 7:00 pm

Kokyo Taiko (drums) – Friday evenings, Sunday afternoons



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January 2025 Calendar

Events may be canceled or moved:
Check www.facebook.com/budtempchi for the most up-to-date changes.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1 New Years service 11 am	2	3 Taiko* 7pm	4 Qigong 10:00 am
5 Meditation 9:00 am Monthly memorial service 11am	6 laido* 7:00 pm	7	8	9 Meditation 7:15 pm	10 Taiko* 7pm	11 Qigong 10:00 am
12 Meditation 9:00 am Regular service 11am	13 laido* 7:00pm	14	15	16 Meditation 7:15pm	7 Taiko* 7pm	18 Qigong 10:00 am
19 Meditation 9:00 am Regular service11am	20 laido* 7:00pm	21	22	23 Meditation 7:15pm	24 Taiko* 7pm	25 Qigong 10:00 am
26 Meditation 9:00 am Eitaikyo Service 11am Membership Meeting noon	27 laido* 7:00pm	28	29	30 Meditation 7:15 PM	31 Taiko* 7pm	

*laido and Taiko require appointments made in advance